

Counterfeit Christian

n/a

Ready:

"Two men went up to the temple complex to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee took his stand and was praying like this: 'God, I thank You that I'm not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.'

"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, turn Your wrath from me—a sinner! I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.'

- Luke 18:10-14

Set

So many times we hear the word hypocrite and automatically think bad things. Ask someone why they don't go to church, and they will often say that it is because the church is full of hypocrites. In his article "Two-faced People," Tim Stafford states that a hypocrite might be called a counterfeit Christian. That comparison really sheds light.

Why do people create counterfeits? Because what they are replicating is valuable. No one fakes a traffic ticket or a bad report card. They fake \$20 bills. Stafford goes on to say that people will pretend to be rich or great football players but not child-beaters. And in the same way, people will pretend to have a relationship with God because they see it as something valuable.

In a strange way, the presence of hypocrites demonstrates how desirable real Christianity is. Stafford states that the only reason to be a hypocritical Christian is because one thinks that knowing God is valuable. And that kind of valuable Christianity must be seen in order for others to want to do more than just fake the relationship.

Recently I witnessed the value of our faith in a middle school basketball game. On this team, the boys have 13 players and only 12 uniforms. In every game, the 13th boy sits on the end of the bench, unable to play. After the first half of a particular game, the score was 16-4. One of the starters of the winning team wanted to give his uniform to the 13th man so he could play. If this happened, the team would be charged a technical foul. To the team, however, this was okay. The technical foul shots were taken to start the second half, and the 13th man got in the game.

Acts like this make Christianity valuable and show the world what it means to have a true relationship with the Lord. It makes me proud to be a Christian. Today, I pray that we all will

see the incredible value of a relationship with Jesus Christ and be moved from hypocrisy to authenticity.

Go

1. Reflect on the value of being a Christian. Is that something that others notice in you and want for themselves?
2. Matthew 22:37 says we must love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind. How well do you carry out this command?
3. How does that kind of love and devotion to God display the value of our faith?

Workout

Isaiah 61:1-3

1 Peter 1:22-23

1 John 3:16



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